

Emotional and Narrative Responses of Students to Targeted Educational Experiences

Emotional and Narrative Responses of Students to Targeted Educational Experiences: An
Exploratory Study Employing the Use of Emotional Measurement

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Abstract

Current educational research suggests that emotions can either enhance or inhibit the ability to learn, with social and cultural influences causing changes in behavior and altering biological processes. In this exploratory study researchers utilized a qualitative design to seek insight into student emotions associated with school attitude and perceived school experiences. Three experimental conditions were introduced to measure changes in eleven basic emotions: happiness, interest, surprise, contempt, disgust, shame, fear, anger, distress, sadness, and anxiety. Results identified the directionality and magnitude of the emotional changes, underscored the importance of “other than academic” endeavors that promote positive school experiences, and acknowledged the need for increased opportunities for playfulness, autonomy, and acceptance in the classroom. Study findings indicated that successful educational experiences are connected to positive emotions/relationships with negative educational experiences disconnected or at odds relationally. A thorough understanding of the role emotions play in relation to school attitude is crucial if educators are to be successful at designing and implementing emotionally sound instructional programs that promote positive school attitudes in students.

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As contemporary researchers broaden their knowledge of educational strategies that enable students to thrive and succeed within the learning environment, the study of academic emotions demands increased attention. Once relatively unexplored except for studies pertaining to test anxiety, school refusal, and motivation (Goetz, Pekrun, Hall, & Haag, 2006; Kearney, 2006; Schweinle, Meyer, & Turner, 2006), the focus of current work is shifting to a recognition of the overall importance and value of studying affect within the educational context. According to Schultz and Lanehart (2002), “Emotions are intimately involved in virtually every aspect of the teaching and learning process and, therefore, an understanding of the nature of emotions within the school context is essential” (p. 67).

The field of social neuroscience suggests that emotions can either enhance or inhibit the ability to learn, with social and cultural influences not only causing behavior but also altering biological processes (Cacioppo, Berntson, Sheridan, & McClintock, 2000). In fact, according to recent research pertaining to *mirror neurons*, humans have mutually influencing emotional centers that enable them to create inner simulations, embodied simulations, of what is going on inside the minds of others thus providing a basis for inference and prediction (Bates, Patel, & Liddle, 2005). With this in mind, it is the essential task of school leaders to create and maintain positive emotional climates that enable students to function at optimal levels and excel (Goleman, 2006).

Assuming that school attitude is a bipolar construct ranging from “like” school to “don’t like” school, our research was designed to explore student emotions related to attitude toward school. Identifying the emotions involved when students self-report their feelings about school

contributes to an understanding of the emotional portrait of the students. A thorough understanding of the role emotions play in relation to school attitude is crucial if educators are to be successful at designing and implementing emotionally sound instructional programs that promote positive school attitudes in students.

Understanding Human Emotions

We are all mental, physical, and emotional beings. Emotions are neurological and biochemical processes that can both respond to what we think and feel as well as affect what we think and feel. There is no way to separate emotions from the mental and physical processes; they constitute an essential linkage between mind and body (Pert, 1999). The new found importance of this linkage has prompted the National Institute of Health (NIH) to request research into how emotions affect aging, cancer treatment, cardiac rehabilitation, and mental health issues such as depression, anxiety, and substance abuse (National Institute of Health [NIH], 2000).

Much like the keys on a piano, emotions are very separate and distinct. However, we don't feel them that way; what we feel is always a mixture of the basic emotions. For this reason most of us are quite unaware of the distinct and separate emotions that are present. Most people cannot name the basic emotions much less recognize them when they feel them. When asked how they feel, students typically respond "OK" or "fine" instead of "pretty angry with a good dose of contempt, some anxiety, and a whole lot of sadness." Except in those rare and unpleasant instances when we feel profound anger or fear, most individuals normally sense only a blend of the basic emotions making it difficult to get to know and acknowledge them individually.

Emotions in the Classroom

Researchers in the field of education maintain that emotions are central to learning (Do & Schallert, 2004; Op't Eynde & De Corte, 2002) with students' classroom experiences often including social and interpersonal affective processes as well as intellectual, cognitive processes (Goodenow, 1993). In Boekaerts' model of adaptable learning, students are acknowledged as having two primary goals: 1) increasing their resources by learning what they need to learn, and 2) maintaining a reasonably positive sense of well-being. It is theorized in this model that negative cognitions and emotions will dominate when the learner appraises the learning situation as threatening to well-being. Upon perception of threat, the student's primary goal is to initiate activity in the *coping mode* to restore a sense of well-being. Conversely, when learning situations are viewed as leading to gains in competency, positive cognitions and emotions dominate and lead to a willingness to invest effort and act in the *mastery mode* (Vermeer, Boekaerts, & Seegers; 2000).

Self-science, a relatively new approach in the field of emotion and instruction (Astleitner & Leutner, 2000), is grounded in the emotional intelligence work of Daniel Goleman. This theory-based approach proposes that instruction should be designed to educate students in an emotionally sound manner. Expanding on this concept, Astleitner (2000) maintains that emotionally sound instruction must focus on instructional strategies that increase positive emotions (sympathy and pleasure) while decreasing negative emotions (fear, envy, and anger). "According to the Fear-Envy-Anger-Sympathy-Pleasure (FEASP) approach for designing emotionally sound instruction, the instructional designer must analyze emotional problems before and during instruction" (Astleitner & Leutner, 2000, p. 498). Within the FEASP-approach of emotional design 20 instructional strategies are identified to decrease unpleasant emotions (fear, envy, and anger) and to increase pleasant emotions (sympathy and pleasure).

We can easily reason that if a student senses happiness in relation to educational activities, that student is likely to desire continued engagement in the activities that have resulted in pleasant or desirable emotions. In a similar way, each of the other basic emotions has an impact on how the student feels about school. For example, when the educational environment draws and holds the attention of the student, interest increases. When the educational environment presents an unexpected quality or feature, the student experiences an increase in surprise. An understanding of the sensations associated with particular emotions is critical to an accurate interpretation of the role emotions play within the classroom. Educational implications of the basic emotions are found in Table 1.

Table 1

Key Educational Implications of the Basic Eleven Emotions

<u>Emotion</u>	<u>Student Sensation</u>
Happiness	Student well-being.
Interest	Events draw and hold attention.
Surprise	Response to the unexpected.
Disgust	Sense of distaste or revulsion.
Contempt	Blame of others.
Anger	Propensity to take action or fight.
Fear	Sense of a specific threat.
Anxiety	Sense of a nonspecific threat.
Shame	Sense that self is faulty.
Distress	Sense that help is needed.
<u>Sadness</u>	<u>Sense of personal loss.</u>

You will notice that many of the basic emotions are unpleasant. This is because emotions evolved primarily to protect an individual from different types of threats. You will also notice that the first three emotions (happiness, interest, and surprise) are generally pleasant or neutral while the remaining eight emotions (disgust, contempt, anger, fear, anxiety, shame, distress, and sadness) are generally unpleasant often emerging in response to a real or perceived threat or attack. Thus, the learning environment can be improved by fostering the emotions of happiness, interest, and surprise while appropriately reducing the other emotions: disgust, contempt, anger, fear, anxiety, shame, distress, and sadness.

Measuring Emotions

The evolution of classroom research pertaining to emotions has resulted in academic emotions being viewed as integral parts of the interpersonal process that creates classroom contexts. Researchers cite numerous reasons for the investigation of student emotions: 1) emotions are related to well-being; 2) emotions impact the quality of learning and achievement; 3) emotions impact the quality of communication in the classroom; and 4) emotions make it possible for researchers to design theory-driven intervention and evaluation programs designed to nurture academic emotions, learning and achievement (Goetz, et al., 2006). With academic emotions being advanced as critical components to the learning process and the educational environment, it is imperative that methods for assessing and understanding emotions within the classroom setting be identified and explored. Studies of affective processes within the classroom, however, pose unique challenges in terms of methodological issues. According to Op't Eynde and De Corte (2002), the study of students' emotions in classroom contexts requires a variety of data sources and analytic approaches such as interviews, observations, discourse analysis, and concurrent assessments of affective states.

Method

Participants

Study participants consisted of nine eighth-grade students enrolled in a small, Catholic elementary school in south central Texas. All participants were required to have parental permission in order to participate. Three males and six females participated in the study, which included five Hispanic, one African-American, and three Anglo-American participants. Seven of the participating students reported “liking” school while two of the students reported “not liking” school. When asked to self-report academic ability, none of the students reported being a struggling student, eight reported being average students, and one reported being a strong student.

Materials

Over the past eight years a computer-based system has been developed and successfully field-tested that uses visual images of expression to measure and interpret individual human emotions. This system, Emogram, can be used to provide immediate insight into the emotional responses of students prompted by recalled events, current experiences and anticipated events. The primary application for this system has been within school counseling settings, with a focus on student responses to educational experiences.

Emogram developers incorporated eleven basic emotions into their system’s knowledge base: happiness, surprise, interest, anger, sadness, shame disgust, distress, contempt, fear, and anxiety. Measurement of emotional changes are based upon judgments of concordance with facial expression images providing the means to bypass some of the cognitive processes necessary for conventional self-assessments thus enhancing the accuracy of the self-report. Concepts and tools derived from nonlinear systems theory are then used to analyze and track emotion interactions and changes that occur over time.

Emogram utilizes thirty-three images represent varying degrees of expression for each of the eleven identified emotions. Each image complies with Paul Ekman's Facial Action Coding System (FACS) thus allowing for objective identification of an emotion from the combination of facial muscles used to express it (Ekman & Friesen, 1978). In an attempt to maximize the level of concordance, five sets of images representing both gender and ethnic diversity were produced. A sample of the images is provided in Figure 1 along with a general description of each emotion.

Design and Procedures

A qualitative, exploratory study was utilized to seek insight into the emotions associated with students' experiences and attitudes relating to school. Data collection consisted of four Emogram assessments, conducted in two group-sessions, and three narratives that included written descriptions of targeted situations. When administered the Emogram, students were instructed not to analyze the photographs cognitively, but rather, to simply answer the following question: "To what extent do you feel the way the person in the photograph feels?"

A total of three experimental conditions were introduced in the research design: X_1 , X_2 , and X_3 . The first condition, X_1 , consisted of each participant's recollection of a school experience that supported "liking" school. The second condition, X_2 , consisted of each participant's recollection of a school experience that supported "not liking" school. The third condition, X_3 , consisted of each participant's anticipated experience associated with transitioning to high school. Scores derived from each Emogram assessment include scores for each of the eleven emotions: happiness, surprise, interest, sadness, anger, fear, disgust, contempt, shame, distress, and anxiety. The testing design is defined as follows:

1 st Emogram	X_1	2 nd Emogram	X_2	3 rd Emogram	X_3	4 th Emogram
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Changes in the dependent variables between scores obtained on the baseline, or first

Figure 1

Sample Emogram Images Representing the 11 Basic Emotions

BASIC HUMAN EMOTIONS

Emotions are separate and distinct. How we feel at any moment is always a combination of several basic emotions. Emotions are most clearly communicated by facial expressions which have been shown to be consistently expressed and interpreted across cultures. Here are eleven basic emotions along with precise facial expressions of each. As you look at each photo note your own emotional reaction to each expression.

	HAPPINESS: Happiness refers to the positive emotional state sometimes referred to as enjoyment-joy. It emerges when one feels he or she is making reasonable- or rapid-progress toward whatever is desired.		SHAME: Shame is a particularly powerful emotions that quickly emerges whenever we feel any sense of personal weakness or defectiveness.
	INTEREST: This emotion prepares us to interact with elements in the environment. It is a sign of openness or alertness. Interest indicates that we are willing and motivated to inquire into something new.		FEAR: People experience fear in the face of specific, sudden, and concrete threat of physical harm. When there is fear, the fearful person can name the feared source of the stimulus, there is also a strong motivation to retreat or escape from the feared object.
	SURPRISE: Surprise is related to what we know as our "startle" reflex. Like interest, it relates to our readiness to attend to incoming information; however, it also has the function of "blearing the decks" so we can attend to whatever is surprising.		ANGER: We feel anger when we believe someone has deliberately committed an offense, with demeaning or malevolent intentions, against ourselves or our family and friends. Anger is motivating because it carries a desire to change or destroy the source of the anger.
	CONTEMPT: The purpose of this emotional state and the facial expression related to it is to communicate that another is considered inferior; it is used to place another person in a position to feel shame or fear.		DISTRESS: Distress is a call for help. In the young, distress is always linked with crying. Adults experiencing distress may "feel like crying", distress presents an expression that says "please help me."
	DISGUST: We respond with disgust when we deem something to be distasteful or noxious. This response could be the result of substance smelled or held in the mouth that produces revulsion or it could be a response to ideas or images which we consider repugnant.		SADNESS: Sadness is an emotional state usually linked to loss. It reflects a sense of helplessness and resignation toward the loss.
			ANXIETY: A unique emotion, anxiety is the result of fear but, rather than having a specific source of that fear, anxiety has an unknown or undefined cause. Essentially, the person who feels anxiety senses something is wrong but is unable to identify the precise source of the threat.

From *Emogram Training Materials*, 2003. Copyright 2003 by Chaotics International. Reprinted with permission of the author.

assessment, and the second Emogram assessment were included as dependent variables as were differences between baseline and the third and baseline to fourth assessments. Keeping in mind the three experimental conditions (like school, don't like school, high school) and the eleven emotions (happiness, surprise, interest, sadness, anger, fear, disgust, contempt, shame, distress, and anxiety), result reporting included three "change" scores for each of the eleven emotions.

Differences observed from one observation to another were attributed to the introduction of experimental conditions consisting of self-selected recall/awareness of personal experiences associated with school. The four points of assessment were categorized as follows: 1) baseline assessment; 2) recall of a past experience associated with "liking" school; 3) recall of a past experience associated with "not liking" school; and 4) awareness of anticipated experiences pertaining to high school. As the targeted experiences were associated with self-selected past or anticipated experiences, students were asked to describe in writing their thoughts related to the self-selected events providing enough detail so that the researcher would have a clear understanding of the stories that provided the framework for the self-reported feelings.

Results

The purpose of the study was to explore the relationships between emotions and various school experiences. Data, obtained from Emogram administrations and student narratives, were analyzed to gain greater awareness of the influence and experience of emotions in the education setting. Collected data were analyzed in two phases with the first phase analyzing results from Emogram and the second phase focusing on a qualitative analysis of the students' narrative responses.

Analysis of Emotional Changes

Eleven emotions were measured using the Emogram program: happiness, interest, surprise, contempt, disgust, shame, anger, distress, sadness, anxiety, fear. An emotional quality (EQ) score was derived and is reported. Four individual Emograms were administered to the group, yielding three measured changes (delta): baseline to positive event; baseline to negative event, and; baseline to future. Measures indicate directionality (increase, decrease or no change) and magnitude of change. Identifying the directionality of the emotions involved when students self-report their feelings about school contributes to the understanding of the emotional portrait of the students.

When participants focused on an event associated with “liking” school, increases were found in Happiness (0.76), Interest (0.44), Surprise (0.11) but also Fear (0.12). Decreases were found in Contempt (-0.98), Disgust (-0.08), Shame (-0.01), Anger (-0.52), Distress (-0.13), Sadness (-0.24), and Anxiety (-0.15). The overall emotional reaction is captured by the Emotional Quality score of 4.77.

Targeting events associated with “not liking” school caused increases in the following emotions: Surprise (0.86), Contempt (0.96), Disgust (0.71), Shame (0.16), Fear (0.49), Anger (0.69), Distress (0.96), Sadness (1.05) and Anxiety (0.96). Decreases were found in Happiness (-1.63), and Interest (-0.17). In this assessment the Emotional Quality score declined to -47.07.

When participants focused on future events (transitioning from middle school to high school), increases were found in Happiness (0.31), Interest (0.77), Surprise (0.70), Shame (0.20), Fear (0.15), Distress (0.13), and Anxiety (0.05). Decreases were found in Contempt (-0.68), Disgust (-0.19), Anger (-0.90), and Sadness (-0.01). The Emotional Quality score for this session increased to 18.35. A detailed listing of emotional changes pertaining to each of the three experimental conditions can be found in Table 2.

Table 2

Average Emotion Measures of Student Experiences

	HAPPINESS	INTEREST	SURPRISE	CONTEMPT	DISGUST	SHAME	FEAR	ANGER	DISTRESS	SADNESS	ANXIETY	EMOTIONAL QUALITY
LIKE SCHOOL	+0.76	+0.44	+0.11	-0.93	-0.08	-0.01	+0.12	-0.52	-0.13	-0.24	-0.15	+4.77
DISLIKE SCHOOL	-1.63	-0.17	+0.86	+0.96	+0.71	+0.16	+0.49	+0.69	+0.96	+1.05	+0.96	-47.07
HIGH SCHOOL	+0.31	+0.77	+0.70	-0.68	-0.19	+0.20	+0.15	-0.90	+0.13	-0.01	+0.05	+18.35

Analysis of the Narratives

The second part of the data analysis consisted of a qualitative assessment of the student narratives. Three narratives were requested from the students: 1) instructed recall of a past experience associated with “liking” school; 2) instructed recall of a past experience associated with “not liking” school; and 3) instructed recall/awareness of speculations and anticipations associated with transitioning to high school. The open-ended response data for each of the three prompts was coded and analyzed according to recurring words, phrases, and themes.

Commonalities within and among the responses were noted and major themes identified.

Experiences Associated with “Liking” School

Analysis of responses to the instructed recall of a past experience associated with “liking” school resulted in the identification of three major themes. General themes emerging from the instructed recall of a “liking” school experience included the following: 1) sense of belonging; 2) playfulness; and 3) autonomy.

All positive experience narratives contained the word *friend*, the word *friends*, or the specific name of a friend. Many of the student narratives included connections between friendships and school motivation. One such transcript is as follows: “I love being with my

friends because we just laugh and have fun. That's one of the things that get me up and ready to go to school."

In addition, all positive experience narratives had a playful nature and using words like *laugh, fun, played, joked around, and feels good*. Participant responses alluded to a fairly unstructured, active, carefree setting. One participant wrote the following:

I think one of the things that made me like school is during field day. It was so fun. I am a big fan of having fun. All the class got to do so many activities and we were all having fun.

When students were asked to recall a positive school experience representative of "liking" school, only one participant described an actual classroom situation. This student's narrative is as follows:

I was sitting in class with my friends, and our teacher was teaching us how to crop pictures on the computer and put them in other pictures. We were on the computer putting our friends' heads on crazy animals or on cartoons. We were showing each other and had a really fun time.

Finally, the positive experience narratives depicted students in charge of their own actions. Autonomy and self-agency were major themes in the narratives. Although adults were often around in supervisory roles, the students were interacting with other students and self-directing their activities. According to one student:

Me and my friend Sean were in P.E. and we were playing basketball. Then we got bored and started to throw basketballs at each other. He hit me with one and started running away. I picked up the ball and just threw it at him without looking. It bounced and got caught between his legs and he fell.

That must have been the funniest time in P.E.

Experiences Associated with “Not Liking” School

The analysis of negative school experience responses resulted in the identification of three major themes: 1) isolation/loneliness; 2) task-focused setting; and 3) injustice/unfair treatment. It is interesting to note how these three themes are diametrically opposed to the themes of belonging, playfulness, and autonomy generated by the positive school experience narratives.

To begin with, the negative school experience narratives depicted situations where students were isolated, hurt, overwhelmed, and defeated. Although teachers/adults were prominent in the recalled events, they were usually portrayed in overly critical or judgmental roles. According to one student:

I didn't like it when at lunch, we had to sit in a boy girl pattern. I was talking to my friends, then the teacher interrupted everyone and told us that there will be assigned seats for lunch. So they told us to sit where they told us to. I didn't like any of the people who were near me because they were just annoying. This is the one time that was a bad thing that happened during school.

In this scenario, the separation from friends is problematic for the student. What had been an enjoyable lunch complete with a sense of belonging turned into a miserable experience of detachment and isolation.

Many of the negative school experience narratives depicted task-focused settings. Whether eating lunch, playing basketball, or in class, examples portrayed situations where task performance (identified by the adult) was given priority over relationship and concern for the

individual. One student wrote about the frustrations experienced when a teacher completely overlooked the family's financial hardships to repeatedly focus on a dress code issue:

I walked into Mr. Martin's class and the day before he gave me a slip for not having the right shoes. I told him my dad doesn't get paid until Friday. He gave me another one for my shoes. I was SO Angry.

In this narrative, the student is completely frustrated by the fact that an adult would repeatedly write up a student for a rule infraction that the student had no control over. The teacher's actions highlight the misconception that it is more important to address a dress code infraction than it is to understand and deal with the reality of the family's financial needs and concerns.

The third theme permeating the recall of negative school experiences revolved around the perception of injustice or unfair treatment, often insinuating unjust treatment toward students by faculty or administrators. The injustices, according to the student reports, ranged from too much homework to arbitrary decision-making. One very frustrated student reported:

I have had many bad moments in school, but I think the time I hated school so much that I wanted to leave was when my math teacher sent me to the back of the class for no reason. I was listening to Michael and Sean, some boys in our class, and then she just called my name and told me to go to the back of the class. I even asked her why she was sending me back there and she just answered me with "Valeria just go to the back." I was so mad. Then when class was almost over I asked her again. She said because I was "disrupting the class." I swear I wasn't even talking, but I just stayed quiet while she was telling me this because I didn't want to hear her anymore.

The perceived injustices experienced by this student are quite obvious. Of special interest is the fact that the student first tried to address the unfair treatment, but eventually “stayed quiet” so she wouldn’t have to listen to anymore of the unreasonable things the teacher had to say.

Anticipations Associated with Transitioning to High School

The third narrative targeted anticipated feelings relating to high school transitioning. Although this research project was conducted during the first half of the year, students had already begun the process of visiting potential high schools in order to identify their school of choice. When asked to get in touch with anticipations pertaining to high school transitioning, student responses centered on speculations pertaining to two themes: work and fun.

Most of the students voiced concerns about how hard high school would be pointing out that there would probably be a lot of work. Students also mentioned that classes would be harder, and even going from class to class would be more difficult. One student’s speculations about high school included the following:

I think that high school is going to be hard. You have to walk a long way from class to class in some schools. Also, you might not have any friends that go to that new school. That would be a big problem to me.

It is interesting to note that while the student is concerned about the academic demands of high school, the student is also fearful that the absence of friends might worsen the situation.

The second prevalent theme when considering transitioning to high school was a concern for fun. While some students thought that it would be more fun in high school, other students questioned whether it would be fun or not. One participant reported: “I think it will be fun. Cus [sic] some of my friends might go to the same school. But I also think that there will be a lot of

work.” Once again, this student’s narrative combines the topics of work and fun while maintaining an emphasis on fun and the importance of friends and belonging.

A second student offered the following narrative in response to questions pertaining to high school transitioning: “Its [sic] probably going to suck. Because we will be freshmen and nobody likes them.” Although this student’s thoughts are not positive, the narrative’s theme of *fun* (or lack thereof) persists. This student’s focus is definitely directed toward a sense of belonging with the anticipation that if you belong you have fun and if you don’t belong you do not experience fun.

Discussion

Summary and Interpretation of Findings

In this study, we explored student emotions in relation to school attitude and perceived school experiences. Three experimental conditions were introduced to observe changes in eleven basic emotions: happiness, interest, surprise, contempt, disgust, shame, fear, anger, distress, sadness, and anxiety. Nine eighth grade participants were asked to write brief narratives describing the personal context of the three targeted conditions: 1) recall of a past experience associated with “liking” school; 3) recall of a past experience associated with “not liking” school; and 4) awareness of anticipated experiences pertaining to high school.

Consistent with literature pertaining to student well-being, examination of emotions related to positive school experiences revealed increases in happiness, interest, and surprise with decreases observed in contempt, disgust, shame, anger, distress, sadness, and anxiety. Themes emerging from the instructed recall of a “liking” school experience included sense of belonging, playfulness, and autonomy.

Contrary to expectations, an increase in fear was observed in relation to “liking” school narratives. Examination of the student narratives exposed an element of secretiveness in the writings with students often participating in activities unsanctioned by administrators and faculty. The covert nature of the student activities provided explanation for unexpected elevations in the Fear construct.

The introduction of unpleasant school experiences prompted increases in contempt, disgust, shame, fear, anger, distress, sadness, surprise, and anxiety. Decreases were observed in happiness and interest. The analysis of negative school experience responses paralleled the emotion findings identifying themes of isolation/loneliness, task-focused settings, and injustice/unfair treatment. These findings were consistent with previous research and pointed to perceived victimization, blame of others, and loss.

When participants focused on future events (transitioning from middle school to high school), increases were found in happiness, interest, surprise, shame, fear, distress, and anxiety with decreases observed in contempt, disgust, anger, and sadness. This mix of emotions was representative of anticipation combined with apprehension and confirmed the narrative responses that focused on opposing themes of work and fun.

Implications and Future Research

Study results underscore the importance of “other than academic” endeavors that promote positive school experiences. Results confirm the need to incorporate and increase opportunities for playfulness, autonomy, and acceptance in the classroom experience. Study results also acknowledge that a narrowed task accomplishment focus, one that neglects concern for positive student affect, is detrimental to the academic well-being of the student.

From a theoretical perspective, study findings indicate that successful educational experiences are connected to positive emotions/relationships with negative educational experiences disconnected or at odds relationally. This awareness calls for future educational research designed within the framework of Relational-Cultural Theory, acknowledging the benefits of growth-fostering relationships and the dramatic impact of disconnection (Robb, 2006).

Previous research in the area of educational emotions has focused on cognitive assessments of student experience. The findings of this study confirm the value of using emotion assessments in conjunction with self-reported narratives to better understand the emotional portrait of the student. Through the utilization of insights provided by multiple emotion assessment instruments, educators can be afforded opportunities to clearly view the emotional impact of classroom activities and, as a result, design future activities and intervention strategies that enhance student well-being and foster a positive school attitude.

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